

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-25

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-07 H-03 INR-10 L-03

NSAE-00 NSC-10 PA-03 RSC-01 PRS-01 SPC-03 SS-15

USIA-15 ACDA-19 IO-15 MBFR-04 SAJ-01 NIC-01 OMB-01

DRC-01 /139 W

----- 055210

R 091709Z OCT 73

FM AMEMBASSY BONN

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 7913

INFO AMEMBASSY BUDAPEST

AMEMBASSY LONDON

AMEMBASSY MOSCOW

AMEMBASSY PARIS

AMEMBASSY PRAGUE

AMEMBASSY SOFIA

AMEMBASSY WARSAW

USMISSION BERLIN

USMISSION NATO BRUSSELS

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 BONN 14623

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, GW, UR, XH

SUBJECT: THE WEHNER AFFAIR REFUSES TO GO AWAY

REF: BONN 14440

SUMMARY: THE SPD'S EFFORTS TO PAPER OVER THE WEHNER AFFAIR ARE RUNNING INTO DIFFICULTIES NOT LEAST BECAUSE OF WEHNER'S CRITICISM OF THE CHANCELLOR. THE DIFFERENCES AND THE BITTERNESS BETWEEN THE TWO ARE TOO SERIOUS TO BE EASILY CAMOUFLAGED. HOWEVER, THE CONSEQUENCES OF THE ALIENATION ARE NOT YET VISIBLE. END SUMMARY.

1. IT IS NOW APPARENT THAT THE RESENTMENT THAT LED WEHNER TO CRITICIZE HIS GOVERNMENT'S POLICIES IN MOSCOW
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AND THE CHANCELLOR'S SUBSEQUENT ANGER ARE TOO DEEP TO BE

COVERED BY THE SHOW OF UNDERSTANDING AND RECONCILIATION THAT THE GOVERNMENT DUTIFULLY PUT ON DURING THE FIRST WEEK IN OCTOBER.

2. FOR EXAMPLE, WEHNER HAS TOLD REPORTERS THAT, "WHAT THIS GOVERNMENT LACKS IS A HEAD," AND BRANDT HAS, ALSO WITH REPORTERS PRESENT, REFERRED CUTTINGLY TO WEHNER'S "YOUTHFUL ROMANTICISM." AND IF WEHNER'S PRIME MOTIVE WAS TO SPUR THE CHANCELLOR TO GET ON WITH SPD PROGRAMS EVEN IF THESE BROUGHT ON FRICTION WITH THE FDP, HE HAS NOT SUCCEEDED. THE LEADERSHIPS OF THE SPD AND THE FDP ARE REITERATING THEIR UNITY AND, AT THE LAST SUMMIT MEETING OF COALITION LEADERS, FDP CHAIRMAN SCHEEL SAT NEXT TO BRANDT IN THE CHAIR USUALLY OCCUPIED BY SEHNER.

3. IT IS DIFFICULT TO SEE HOW THE COALITION CAN FUNCTION EFFECTIVELY WITH FLOOR LEADER WEHNER AT ODDS WITH HIS CHANCELLOR AND PARTY BOSS, BRANDT, AND WITH HIS DISDAIN FOR THE FDP ALL TOO OBVIOUS. HOWEVER, WEHNER ALSO SAID AFTER HIS MOSCOW CAPER THAT HE INTENDS TO SEEK RE-ELECTION AS FLOOR LEADER IN DECEMBER AND THEN "NOT FOR THE LAST TIME."

4. AS WEHNER WAS MORE THAN ANYONE RESPONSIBLE FOR THE SPD'S RISE TO POWER AND BRANDT'S ELEVATION TO CHANCELLOR, THE DEBT TO HIS AS BEEN A LARGE ONE AS THE CHANCELLOR HAS CONSISTENTLY ACKNOWLEDGED. FURTHERMORE, WEHNER IS A TOUGH AND RESILIENT OLD POLITICO WHO WILL NOT BE MOVED ASIDE EASILY IF HE DOES NOT WANT TO BE. BUT HE HAS BECOME AN EMBARRASSMENT TO HIS LEADERSHIP, AND A LIABILITY OF GROWING SERIOUSNESS TO THE COALITION.

5. SHOULD A WAY TO DUMP WEHNER BE FOUND, NO ONE WOULD BE MORE PLEASED TO SEE HIM GO AND TO ASSUME HIS POSITION THAN SPD DEPUTY CHAIRMAN HELMUT SCHMIDT. WITH SCHMIDT AS FLOOR LEADER, AS HE ONCE WAS, THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE SPD BUNDESTAG GROUP WOULD BE INCREASED AND THE GOVERNMENT BENCHES IN GENERAL WOULD BE BOTH BETTER COORDINATED AND LESS PRONE TO INTERNECINE WAREFARE. HOWEVER, THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN BRAND AND THE

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AMBITIOUS, ENERGETIC SCHMIDT IS NOT A CLOSE ONE AND BRANDT HAS MORE THAN ONCE PRIVATELY REMARKED THAT HE WOULD NEVER LET SCHMIDT BECOME IN FACT WHAT HE ASPIRES TO BE, HIS HEIR APPARENT.

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 2 OF 2 BONN 14623

6. NOR IS THE PROBLEM FOR BRANDT SIMPLY A SHORT TERM ONE UNTIL THE ELECTION OF 1976, BY WHICH TIME PRESUMABLY WEHNER WOULD BE GONE NO MATTER WHAT. CURRENT POLLS SHOW THE SPD SLIPPING AND THE FDP GAINING. AS THE PROSPECTS FOR AN ABSOLUTE SPD MAJORITY ARE NOT GOOD FOR THE FORE-SEEABLE FUTURE, THE FDP REMAINS WHAT IT WAS IN BOTH 1969 AND 1972, THE PARTY THAT DETERMINES WHO IS TO BE CHANCELLOR. BRANDT'S DEFERENCE TO SCHEEL, PARTICULARLY IN THE FACE OF WEHNER'S ATTACK, CLEARLY DEFINES THE WAY HE INTENDS TO GO. WHAT REMAINS TO BE SEEN IS HOW WEHNER WILL IN THE LONG RUN CONDUCT HIMSELF AND/OR BE DEALT WITH AND WHAT THIS WILL MEAN FOR THE ALREADY SIGNIFICANT LEFT-RIGHT TENSIONS IN THE SPD.
HILLENBRAND

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